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ABSTRACT

This book, one of a series, focuses on ways to help children enjoy writing and use it as a tool to communicate with others and express themselves. The message of the series urges parents and children to spend time together, talk about stories, and learn together. The first part of each book presents stories appropriate for varying grade levels, both younger children and those in grades three and four, and each book presents stories on a particular theme. The Read-along Stories in this book are: "The Houses on Harmony Lane" (Lloydene Cook); "Sara's Discovery" (Nancy Brayton-John); and "Diamonds in the Rough" (Vivian Endicott). On an accompanying audiotape, the stories are performed as radio dramas, allowing children to read along. The second half of each book provides ideas and guidelines for parents, as well as activities and books for additional reading. This book includes the following topics: (1) why is personal writing important? (2) how can parents encourage their children? and (3) parent's role. It also includes suggested activities such as communicating only through written letters for a day, making books, writing down a guided fantasy, going to an author signing, and reading familiar fairy tales written from another viewpoint. Contains 31 references. (EF)

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Parents and Children Together SERIES

MAKING WRITING MEANINGFUL

ED 452 534

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PLUS

Read-along Stories:

The Houses on Harmony Lane

Sara's Discovery

Diamond in the Rough

CS 217 394

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

Guidance and fun for parents and children, ages 4–9

This book has a companion audio tape also entitled "Making Writing Meaningful." Occasionally there are directions on the tape that do not appear in the book or headings in the book that aren't spoken on the tape.

Parents and Children Together SERIES
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Introduction

Get together with your children. Talk about stories and learn together. That's the message of this series of books, ***Parents and Children Together***.

You will find here several stories that you and your children can read together and talk about in a relaxed way. Some stories are more appropriate for younger children, some for children in grades three and four. Have fun with them but also use them as a way of guiding your child's thinking.

Before each story, you will be prompted to focus your attention. After the story, review some of the issues in a relaxed conversation. Please feel comfortable in making comments or asking questions when the two of you are reading a story together. Have fun along the way. The stories are performed as radio dramas on the accompanying audiotape. That gives your child a chance to read along with the voices on the tape.

In the second half of this book and on one side of the audio tape there are ideas and guidelines for the interested parent. On the topic of this particular volume you will find hints, practice activities, and books for further reading. If you want to use the tape as a way of preparing for reading with your child or in helping your child study, the tape gives you an opportunity to listen while you are driving or jogging.

For more ideas on any of the topics in this Series, visit ***www.kidscanlearn.com*** or ***http://eric.indiana.edu***

ROOTS
ALEX HALEY

Getting Started

Writing is a skill we need both in school and in the workplace. In this book we focus on ways you can help your children enjoy writing and use it as a tool to communicate with others and express themselves.

On side B of the tape are three read-along stories. We encourage you to listen to these stories and to read them with your children so that they can participate in the excitement of story reading. Of course, your child can also listen to the stories alone, if you wish.

You may want to take some time to look ahead at these stories before you read along with your child. It is also important to talk about them ahead of time.

> Before you read the story, talk about the title or things that might happen in it. Then, after you have finished reading, talk about what happened in the story. By the way, if in the middle of the story something funny or interesting happens, it's OK to stop the tape and discuss the event, or ask your child questions such as "Do you know what marigolds, geraniums, and chrysanthemums look like? Which one do you like the best?" or "Why would storms by different in the mountains than in a city?" or "Do you know what a metronome is?" These questions make your conversations about the story more meaningful and more valuable.

Part I
Read-along Stories

HARMONY LN
LUNCH

The Houses on Harmony Lane

by Lloydene Cook

Things to Do *before* Reading the Story

Talk about what the word *harmony* means. Think about the houses on your street. Can you describe or draw some of the houses on your street? If you can't remember certain things, take a walk to refresh your memory.

There were six houses on Harmony Lane.

Mr. Moose lived in the first house. The Raccoon family lived in the second house. Mr. Fox lived in the third house. Miss Possum lived in the fourth house, and Mr. and Mrs. Squirrel lived in the fifth house. Nobody lived in the sixth house.

All six houses were exactly alike. They were each painted yellow. They all had white shutters and blue-checkered curtains at the windows. There were red geraniums growing in each flower bed, and there was one maple tree planted in exactly the same spot in each front yard.

Everyone was happy on Harmony Lane until Miss Owl moved in. The first thing Miss Owl did was to replace her red geraniums with marigolds and chrysanthemums.

The neighbors watched and whispered among themselves.

"We've always grown geraniums on Harmony Lane," Mr. Moose sniffed.

"Geraniums are nice," Miss Owl said. "But I also like marigolds and chrysanthemums."

The next thing Miss Owl did was to plant a persimmon tree in her front yard.

"Nobody else has a persimmon tree on Harmony Lane," the Raccoon family complained.

"I'll share my persimmons with everyone," Miss Owl said.

One day Miss Owl took down her blue-checkered curtains and hung red-striped ones.

"No one on Harmony Lane has ever had red-striped curtains," protested Mr. Fox.

"I made them myself," Miss Owl said "Aren't they cheerful?"

Then the worst thing happened. Miss Owl painted her house green.

"But all the houses on Harmony Lane are yellow," Miss Possum whined.

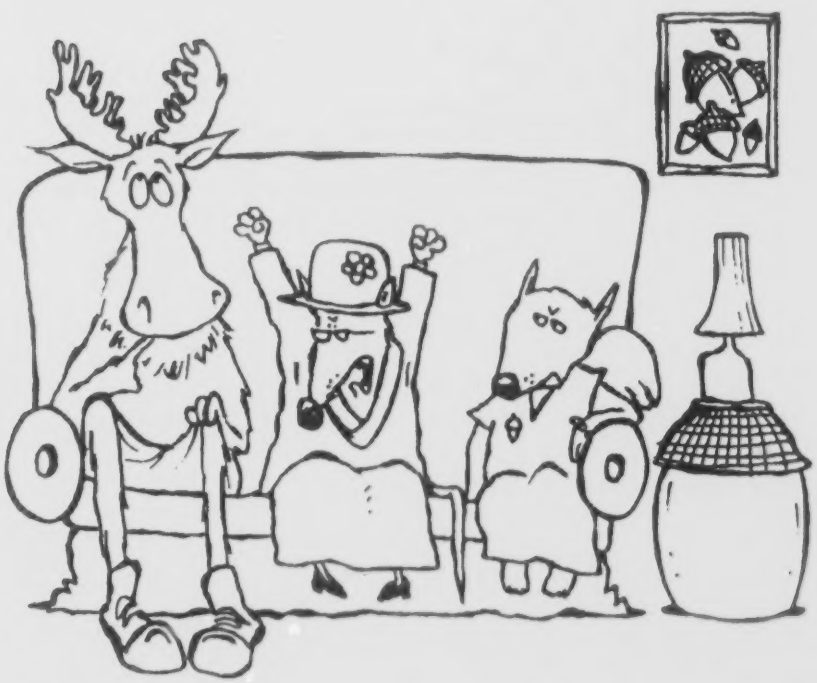
"Now there is a green house on Harmony Lane, too," Miss Owl said with a smile.

Later that day all of Miss Owl's neighbors held a meeting at Mr. and Mrs. Squirrel's house.

"Oh, whatever shall we do?" cried Miss Possum.

"Miss Owl's house is different from all the rest," said Mr. Squirrel.

Mr. Moose scratched his head. " Maybe it's good to be different," he said. "I've always wanted to have a blue house with yellow shutters. I think I'll paint my house, too."



"We have always wanted to have some apple trees," Mrs. Raccoon said. "We'll plant some tomorrow."

"And I'm going to sew some new curtains," Mr. Fox said, "I have always wanted green curtains."

"Well, I'm going to build a white picket fence around my house," said Miss Possum.

The next day all the neighbors worked on their houses.

Miss Owl helped, too. She helped Mr. Moose paint his house blue with yellow shutters. She helped the Raccoon family plant apple trees. She helped Mr. Fox sew some green curtains, and she helped Miss Possum build a white picket fence.

When she came to Mr. and Mrs. Squirrel's house, she found them sitting under their maple tree. Their house was still yellow with white shutters and blue-checkered curtains.

"We decided not to change a thing," said Mrs. Squirrel.

"That's a wise decision," said Miss Owl. "You will feel most at home in a house you like."

Things to Do *after* Reading the Story

Why was everyone on Harmony Lane so unhappy when Miss Owl moved in? Would you like to live on a street where all the houses were alike? Why or why not? How do you think everyone living on Harmony Lane felt at the end of the story? Draw or talk about your dream house. What do both the outside and inside look like?

Sara's Discovery

by Nancy Brayton-John

Things to Do *before* Reading the Story

What does it mean to make a discovery? Talk about things you have learned or discovered in the last week.

As she stumbled through the underbrush, Sara glanced worriedly over her shoulder. Grandpa John had warned her to turn back if she saw any storm clouds gathering. She was so intent on following the fawn after she surprised it in the meadow, that she hadn't noticed she had wandered off the path.

"Oh, brother!" Sara mumbled under her breath. "Grandpa John will never let me out of his sight again if I blow it the first time I'm out on my own."

Sara was visiting her grandfather in his mountain cabin for the summer. She'd been there two weeks already and this was the first time he'd trusted her to explore the forest by herself.

She remembered the argument they'd had about it last night. She'd been just as stubborn as he had. So what if she was only twelve years old? She spent most of her afternoons at home riding the city buses to parks or museums. She'd never gotten into any trouble she couldn't get herself out of.

Sara had begged Grandpa John to let her try this day hike alone to prove that she'd learned her way around. If she pulled this off, then maybe he'd let her try an overnight trip later.

She stopped and leaned against a crumbling stump. Her breath was coming in ragged gasps, and she could feel her heart hammering in her chest.

"Calm down!" she whispered as she took a deep breath. "The path has to be nearby, I didn't follow that fawn for more than fifteen or twenty minutes."

Talking to herself always seemed to help her figure out her problems. It was a trick she'd learned from her mother and it had worked countless times before. It never failed to clear her head and lift her spirits.

Sara shivered as she glanced around, hoping to see something familiar. These afternoon thunder storms were totally new to her. Storms seemed to come up so quickly here in the mountains. Only half an hour ago the sky had been a deep blue. Now black, threatening clouds whirled across the gloomy sky.

A flash of light brightened the sky. Then five seconds later...BOOM! The thunder cracked through the treetops and jarred her away from the stump.

Sara's fingers trembled as she tugged the hood of her sweatshirt over her hair. She shivered as she tucked the unruly ends impatiently under the hood.

"I don't need anyone to help me!" she said. "I just have to think of a way to find my way back to the main trail."

She dug her hands into the pockets of her jeans and hunched forward to protect herself from the gust of wind that whipped around her as she walked. "Okay," she muttered. "I'm lost, I admit it. So now what do I do?"

The rain was coming down in sheets. Sara could barely see her hands in front of her face. She'd just have to find a place to wait until the storm blew itself out.

Suddenly, a faint barking in the distance caught her attention. She strained her ears to catch the muffled noise. It sounded like Grandpa John's dog, Rusty.

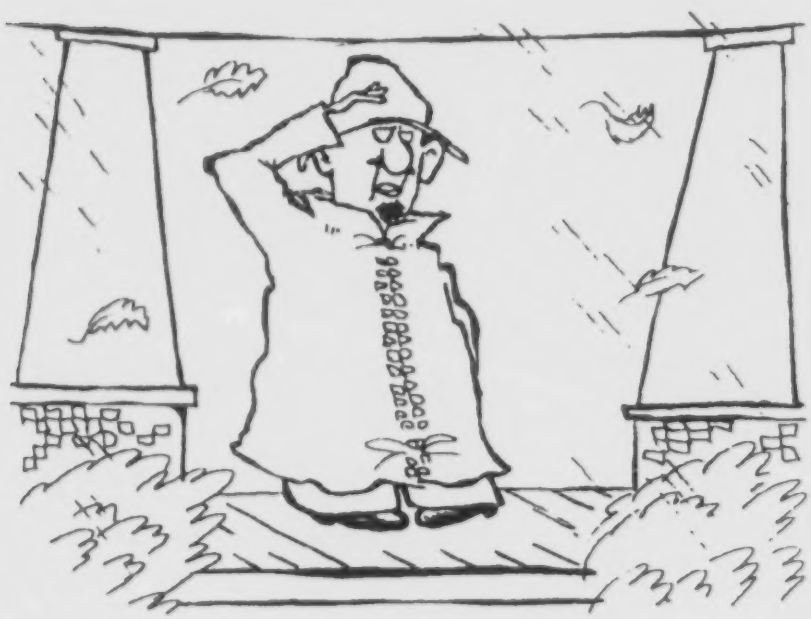
"I'm over here Rusty!" she shouted as she scrambled toward the barking dog. Too relieved to care where she was going, she jumped over logs and charged through the underbrush. Rusty's bark was getting closer and closer.

Another clap of thunder rumbled overhead. This time pounding rain followed it, and pelted her face and arms with sharp, stinging drops. The treetops swayed with the wind like giant metronomes. Sara stood still and watched with wonder as the trees rocked back and forth with the wind. Each time she thought one would surely break or fall over, it recovered and bent back again in the other direction. The whole forest seemed to be swaying around her in a special rhythm all its own.

It was awesome. She seemed so small and powerless compared to this wind. None of her previous adventures had prepared her for this.

Just then she felt a tug on her tennis shoe. There was Rusty! She knelt down and buried her face in Rusty's rain-soaked fur. Rusty whimpered and wiggled out of her arms. He dashed ahead, then glanced back at Sara. She was right behind him!

The rain had turned the forest into an obstacle course, and Sara's feet slid in the mud as she raced to keep up with Rusty. Branches scratched her face, and her cheeks were so spattered with mud that the freckles her grandfather teased her about were barely visible. Rusty stopped now and then to make sure Sara was following close behind.



At last they came to a clearing in the forest. There was Grandpa John's cabin. He stood on the porch in his yellow slicker peering into the storm. Sara rushed into his arms and hot tears ran down her cheeks into his beard.

"I see my search party found you," he said with a twinkle in his eye.

"I'm sorry, Grandpa John," she sobbed. "I should have listened to you. I really don't know enough about the forest to take care of myself yet."

Grandpa John gave her a big bear hug. He tilted her chin up and wiped the mud and tears from her cheeks with a big red handkerchief.

"Sara," he said. "You've just learned the most important lesson of all. It's all right to need people and to ask for help when you need it. We'll take that overnight trip together, and I'll teach you everything I know. I love you, Freckles!"

Sara pulled back the hood of her sweatshirt and shook her wet head real hard, just like she'd seen Rusty do when they'd jumped up on the porch. Then she peeked out from under her curls and grinned at Grandpa John.

"Well, how about showing me the quickest way to dry out after getting drenched in a thunderstorm?" she giggled.

Rusty barked twice and wagged his tail. Hand in hand, Sara and Grandpa John followed him into the warm cabin.

Things to Do *after* Reading the Story

What do you think Sara discovers? Together, make a list of the things each of you likes to have help with. Then make another list which includes things each of you likes to do alone.

Diamonds in the Rough

by Vivian Endicott

Things to Do *before* Reading the Story

"Finders, keepers. Loser, weepers." Have you ever heard this saying? Talk about a time when you found something that belonged to someone else. What did you do with it? Have you ever lost anything that was important to you?

It was a cool, windy day. As Toby and Kani scurried home from school, the orange and brown leaves twirled through the streets and crackled under their feet.

"Bet I can catch more leaves than you," screeched Toby, as he reached upward to catch a large orange maple leaf.

"Bet you can't," cried Kani, and she plucked it right out of his hand. "Ha. Girls can do anything better than boys."

Toby quickly reached for another one, but Kani snatched it, too.

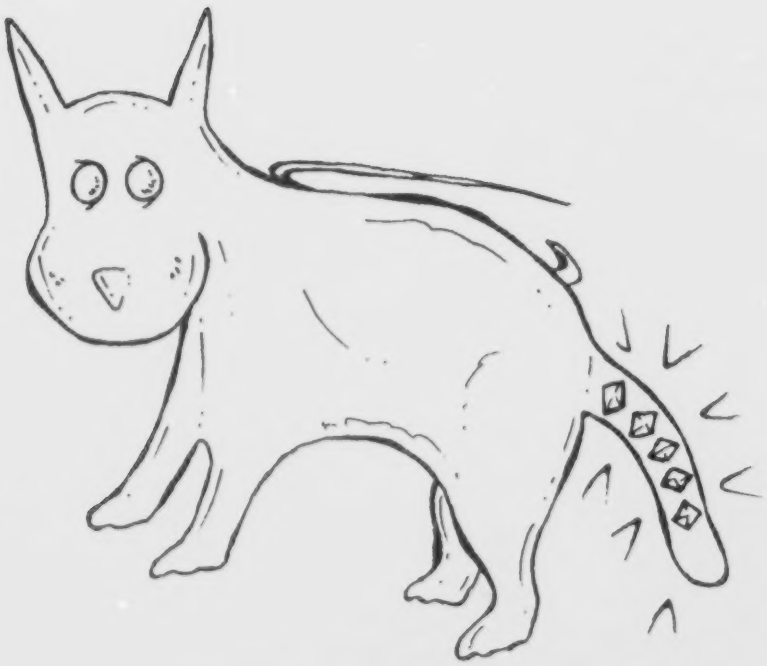
"No fair. You're taller than I am. Let's quit."

"Spoil sport is what you are, Toby Jones," yelled Kani as she ran ahead. She jumped into a large pile of leaves, and tossed them in the air. She had leaves clinging everywhere. Her long brown ponytail was covered with orange-colored leaves. There was even one stuck on her freckled nose. As Toby went by, she put one foot out, and down he went.

If looks could kill, Kani knew she would be dead. Poor Toby, she thought, he just can't take a joke.

"Now why did you do that?" yelled Toby. "Just look at me! I'm so covered with leaves that a bird would think I was a tree. Ouch! My ear hurts. I think I got a burr stuck on it. Take a look."

Kani scooted over the mound of leaves and stared at Toby's ear. "No, it's not a burr. It looks like a pin. Hold still and I'll pull it out. Your hair is tangled around it." She pushed Toby's black curly hair away from his ear, and the pin flopped out in her hand.



Kani looked at the pin and carefully turned it over and over in her hand. It was about four inches long and made in the shape of a cat. Two green stones the size of small peas formed its eyes. The cat's body was tawny gold and there were diamond-like stones on its tail. Kani weighed it thoughtfully in her hand. "For such a little thing, it's pretty heavy," she said. "Here, you take it." As she gingerly placed the brooch in Toby's hand, it sparkled in the sunlight. "I wonder if this is real gold," said Kani.

Rubbing his ear with his free hand, Toby proclaimed, "I know the pin is real. My ear still hurts. But it's probably just a cheap imitation."

"But what if it is real? Someone must have lost it. I think we should take it to the police. What if you lost something? Wouldn't you want someone to return it, if they could?"

"Hey, that's a good idea. We might even get a reward!" Toby grinned, and Kani imagined his cash-register mind busily counting dollars to spend on video games at the Knight's Den. Knight's Den was Toby's favorite hang-out.

Toby grabbed Kani's hand, and shouted, "Come on, let's go."

"Don't break my arm, I'm coming. Slow down, Toby. I...I...I'm out of breath," Kani stammered.

Just then someone shouted, "Hey, kids, wait a minute."

Kani and Toby turned swiftly around and noticed a red-faced man scampering after them. "I think you have something of mine. Let's have it. Now!" he yelled.

"Did you lose something, mister?" Kani cautiously asked.

"You heard me. Give it here," he hissed, and then he grabbed for the pin. "Ouch..."

Kani thought the man looked suspicious. "Run, Toby, run. I don't think this belongs to him," Kani cried, as she jerked the pin out of Toby's hand and began running. "Hurry, Toby, he's right behind us."

As they came around the corner, a policeman crossing the street spied them and yelled, "What's goin' on?"

The red-faced man jumped back in the alley and fled.

Kani breathlessly exclaimed, "We found this pin, and that man...where is he?"

"Slow down. What pin are you talking about?"

Toby related the story, with Kani's approval, and the policeman took the pin and examined it.

"It does look like real gold. You say that man who was chasing you says it's his? I'll just take it to the station and then we'll find out who it belongs to. Come along, now. I'll see you to your home. What's the address?"

Kani slept fitfully that night. Early in the morning she had a dream. Diamonds, rubies, and emeralds scattered in every direction. A tawny-colored cat batted them playfully with his paw as though they were bright balls of yarn. Lightning bolts followed when the jewels collided. The cat pounced on falling crystal raindrops and the golden bell on his collar tinkled as he chased one of the rolling emeralds. Suddenly, the sound of the tinkling bell became louder. As it did, Kani eased open her sleepy eyes. When she began to wake up, she realized two things. First, she became aware that the storm she'd been

dreaming about was real. Then she noticed that the tinkling bell which had wakened her was actually the telephone. "Oh no! I left the window open," she groaned. "I bet the drapes are ruined."

She jumped out of bed, quickly shut the window, and grabbed the phone—all in one fluid motion.

"Hello, hello. Is that you, Toby? Why'd you wait so long to call? Meet me at the Den in fifteen, no, say about twenty minutes," she exclaimed.

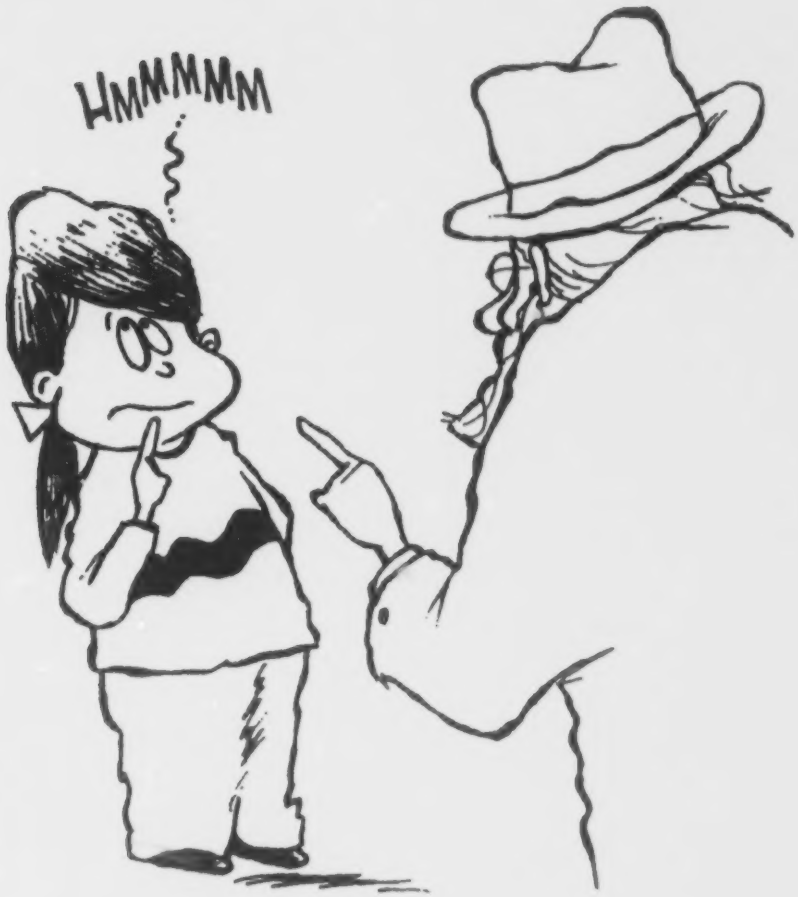
She rushed into the bathroom, grabbed two or three towels and began wiping the windows and floor. When that was done, she tossed her acid-washed jeans out of the drawer, pulled a red and black sweatshirt from its hanger and hurried into the shower. Even though she was ready in just minutes, as she glanced at her Mickey Mouse watch, she thought, "No time to waste...better hurry...Toby had better be there."

Kani ran down the concrete steps and opened her umbrella as the rain poured down the trellis on her. "A good day for ducks," she mumbled.

She didn't look back as she hurried around the corner. Just then a hand fell on her shoulder and a gruff voice said, "Hold still, I want to talk to you."

Kani froze in her tracks. She was afraid the gruff voice belonged to that horrible red-faced man who had chased her and Toby yesterday. "Who...Who are you?" Kani asked, as she looked up into the bluest eyes she had ever seen. The white-bearded, elderly man was peering at her through tiny gold-framed glasses. She thought that he looked like Santa Claus, and wondered if his belly shook like a bowl full of jelly when he laughed.

"I'm sorry if I frightened you, young lady, but weren't you playing in the leaves by the big oak tree on Eighth Street yesterday evening?"



Kani couldn't make up her mind. Should she run, should she scream, or should she answer his question? But this wasn't the man from yesterday. Maybe if she talked to him, she could help Patrolman McDaniels find out who the pin really belonged to.

"Please don't be afraid. Maybe I'd better explain," said the old man. "I'm Mr. Yancy, a jeweler, and I live on Eighth Street. When I got home last night, I reached into my pocket for a pin that I was to repair, and it wasn't there. I came out and searched for it. Then I remembered seeing two kids playing by the oak tree and thought perhaps they had found it." He paused and then stated, "That's all I wanted." He turned to walk away.

"Wait, Mister. Er...Toby and I did find a pin. We gave it to a policeman. He said he would check on it."

Mr. Yancy's face lit up with pleasure as he said, "Thank you very much, young lady." He bowed politely and asked, "Could I please have your name?"

"Kani."

"Kani?"

"Yes," she answered and ran down the street. She didn't stop until she pushed open the door to the Den. Her eyes quickly scanned all the kids enthusiastically playing video games until she spied Toby. He was gulping a cola and was totally involved in a game of Super Mario Brothers III. Toby's whole body jerked with each play he made, and he was yelling like crazy. "Slow down, Toby, slow down," Kani said softly over his shoulder.

He swung around quickly, almost spilling his cola. "Where have you been?" he asked.

"I believe I just talked to the man who lost the pin," Kani said, and she told Toby what had happened.

"Boy, oh, boy. We'll probably get a reward. How much do you think we'll get?"

"Nothing."

"Nothing?" cried Toby. "Why?"

"I didn't tell him my last name," Kani murmured. "I really wasn't sure that he was the owner. I just ran."

"That was dandy," said Toby.

"But, Toby..."

"Forget it. Come on, let's play some games!"

That Saturday passed quickly. After they finished playing video games, Toby and Kani decided they would go to the movies after supper. While she was putting on her brown leather jacket, her mom called, "Someone to see you, Kani."

She hurried into the living room and there stood Mr. Yancy.

"Hello again, Kani."

"How did you find me?" asked Kani.

"I've explained everything to your mother. Here's a little gift for you and your friend."

"But..."

"I cannot thank you enough," and having expressed his gratitude, he bowed and walked down the steps.

Kani's mother hugged her and said, "He found out who you were from Patrolman McDaniels. He said the pin was worth about fifteen thousand dollars! He was grateful that you were honest, and I'm so proud to have a daughter like you."

Kani looked at the hundred dollar bill, blinked her eyes, stared at it again and yelled. Then she went skipping down the steps, "Toby will never believe it. Never, never, never."

Things To Do *after* Reading the Story

Talk about the title of this story. Why do you suppose it is called "Diamonds in the Rough"? Kani and Toby received a reward for returning the treasure they had found. Together, write a different ending for this story.

We hope you had fun with these stories.

Part II
Guidelines for Parents

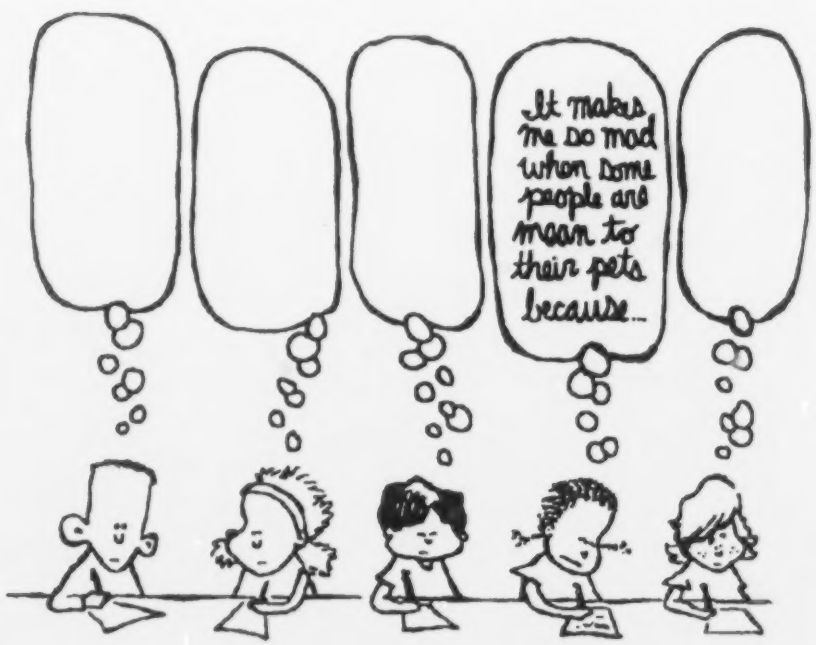
Help Your Child Communicate through Writing

Why do most school compositions get low or mediocre grades? Probably because most school compositions express low, mediocre thoughts.

If it is true that student compositions reflect a low level of thinking, then we have to conclude that students think dull thoughts; or, on the other hand, maybe students do not write about their exciting ideas in school compositions. Perhaps they are saving these exciting ideas for another time or are looking for another way to express them.

It is worthwhile for us to examine our children's writing because that's how they reveal their thoughts in school and later on the job. Teachers evaluate student progress from written exercises, and more and more jobs now require regular written reports.

A report from the National Assessment of Educational Progress shows that only one out of five American students can express herself or himself adequately in writing. That leaves eighty percent of American children in the inadequate category—eighty percent cannot explain their thoughts or their feelings in writing.



What can you as a parent do about improving your children's writing skills? Actually quite a lot. The most important thing you can do is to act as an interested audience for the compositions your children write in school. As you read a school

composition, you could say, "I understand that. That part is clear to me," or, "This section is not clear to me. Is there another way you could describe this part so I can understand your thoughts?" Those kinds of comments show your children that you are reacting to their thoughts, praising clarity, and asking questions when their thoughts are expressed in a jumbled way. And that's the first reaction any thoughtful reader has. Afterward, you can discuss things like punctuation and spelling, if your child needs that kind of help at the moment.

Why is Personal Writing Important?

All writing demands clarity of thought and a search for the right word to express those thoughts. That's where personal, reflective writing becomes valuable. A diary or a personal journal is an excellent vehicle for this kind of expressive writing. It gives children an opportunity to play with their thoughts and with their language. It gives them an experimental playground for their ideas. In a sense, they can show off for themselves, allow themselves the opportunity to test their skills and their strengths—just as children do on a playground—before they ask the advice of an adult. Learning how to communicate their thoughts and feelings in personal writing encourages children to apply their expressive abilities to the more businesslike world of school reports, compositions, and later in life, to writing summaries or letters in the workplace.

Here are a couple of examples of children expressing their personal thoughts. Notice how their choice of words reflects their attempts to understand and interpret their experience.

The Prince Who Wanted A Girl

"Once upon a time there lived a prince, a very sad prince. He wanted a princess to marry him. His father the King wanted for all the girls that came to take a test first, then if they passed it, they would marry the prince. Well some of the girls passed and some didn't. But the trouble was that the girls that passed the prince didn't like them. So his father grew tired of bringing girls that passed all very pretty and rich girls and one day as the prince was taking his royal ride on the royal stable with the his royal horse he say this very poor girl walking along the royal stable. She was very tired she didn't have no shoes her clothes were ripped and she was very dirty. The prince got near her and asked "What's your name?" and the poor girl answered "My name is Gracie, What's your name?" I'm the prince of Europe my name is Alexander, would you like to marry me?" Then the girl said, "Yes." So they got married, he bout her new clothes, Alexander became the King of Europe. And they became happily ever after."

The little girl who wrote this story lived in a very poor town near the Mexican border. If we read closely between the lines, we're able to figure out that this fairy tale is really about a little girl who wants a prince to rescue her from a difficult situation. The line "Once upon a time" expresses the little girl's belief that in a different time and place, her life could be happier.

In the next essay, we see a very powerful example of a young boy attempting to come to grips with his mother's lifestyle.

My Dads

My Mom was married when she was 18. Because she was pregnant with my older brother Steve. When Steve was about 4 years old Bob (my Dad) used to beat him, and then she became pregnant with me. Which was an accedent. And when I was born Bob left us. Which really makes me feel good. I have only seen him about 10 times after he left.

Then a couple of years later she married Cal. I don't really remember that much of him. My Mom and brother say he used to beat me. But, he would come home drunk almost every night. And he smoked too. And my Mom found out a lot of different but personal poroblems he had. And she could not cope with them. So they were devorced, I don't know how long it was But then she married Don. I didn't like him from the start. He was always mean to my Mom, and he tried to hit her with a chair once. Ever since then I've disliked him. She devorced him.

Then about 2 or 3 years later she married Ervin. I think that's how he spelled his name. I liked him. But just before they were married she found out some personal things about him. She picks some real winners. So she got an annulment.

(continued)

So she dated for a while. And pretty soon Don was back. They dated off and on. One night they went out and when I woke up in the morning she wasn't home yet. Just before I left for school she called and said she was gong to pick me up from school. And she told me her and Don had got married last night. So there I was stuck with a man I didn't like and my Mom was married to him. But pretty soon Don was seeing some other girl so they got an annulment.

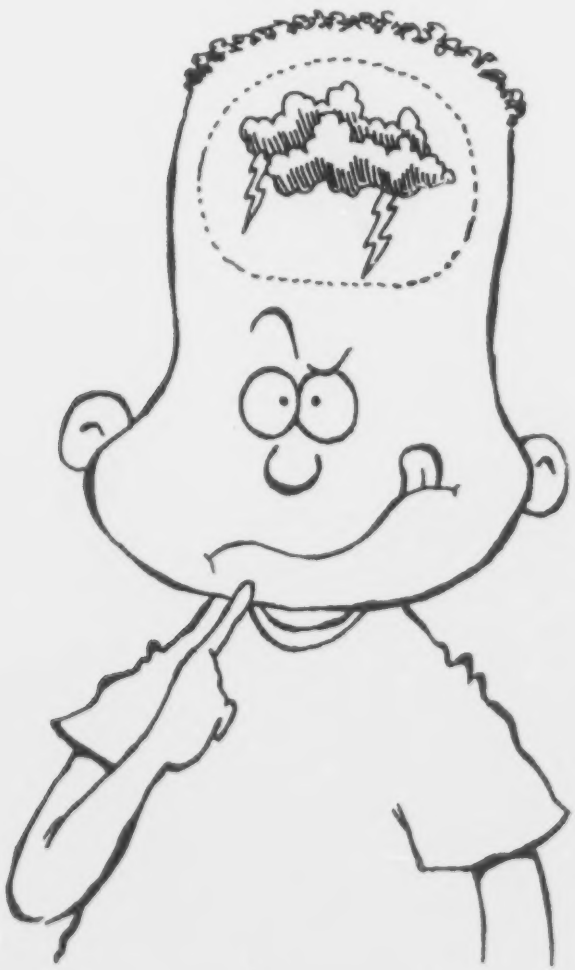
Now she's dating a lot of guys. And she says she's not going to marry for a long time. And only if its in the temple.

But I don't know what to believe what she says. In a way, I think she aught to give up guys.

This young boy has had a lot of uncertainty and upheaval in his life. Notice how his use of phrases like "then a couple of years later" and "I don't know how long it was" represents this boy's attempt to understand disturbing experiences by organizing them into an historical perspective. Writing is a good outlet for him because it has allowed him to communicate his frustrations. This is one of the great advantages of self-expression. Can you imagine the conversation that might take place if this boy and his mother were to talk about how her lifestyle was affecting him? Writing can help your children express their feelings and thoughts in ways that can surprise you. You need to encourage them.

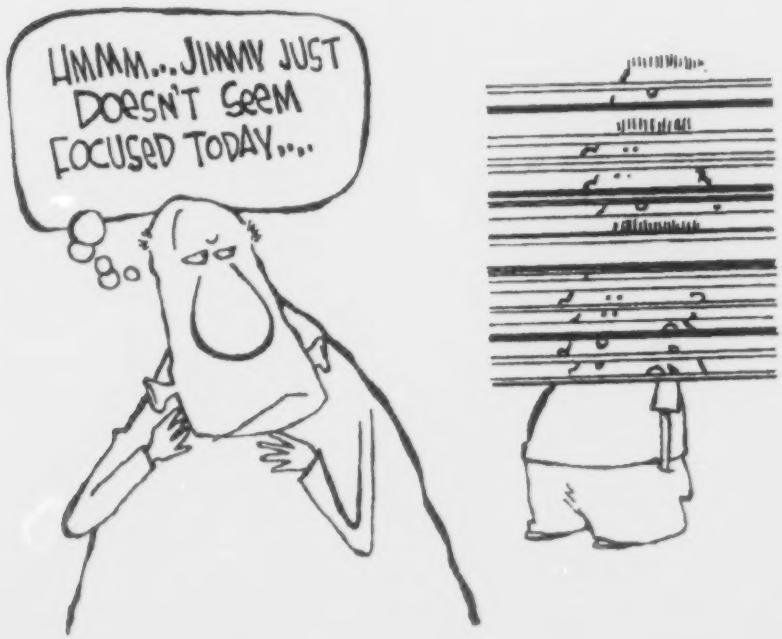
How Can Parents Encourage Their Children?

We, as parents, can help our children develop their abilities to express exciting, meaningful ideas in their writing. All writing requires time for preparation, time for drafting, and time for reviewing. If your children ask for your help or say they don't know what to write about, do some brainstorming with them.



C2

Explore recent events in their lives, trips taken, movies seen, celebrations, or books they have read. Choose one of the topics and ask them to think about how they felt, how it relates to their family or friends, and what impressed them the most. They may want to jot down notes about this topic as you talk together. They may want to draw a picture to give the event a clearer focus in their minds. Perhaps they will share with you what the drawing means to them and why they chose some of the details in it.



Encourage your children to use that discussion with those notes or drawings while they are writing their thoughts and feelings. Maybe they want to tell a story about the topic or the event. A story plan might give them a sense of direction for keeping their ideas flowing.

After they have finished putting their ideas on paper, if they want you to work with them, talk to them about their writing. Unless their piece is quite personal, most children will relish feedback from their parents. They are hoping for encouragement, of course, but they also want to check out their ideas. Are their thoughts clear? Are they valuable? Will an adult appreciate their ideas? So when you are reading your child's expressive writing paper, remember to praise the clear ideas, but also to identify those that are not clear to you. If the writing stems from a formal school assignment, your child may want you to look for other ways to improve the assignment.

C4

Here are a few quick guidelines that may help you work with your child:

1. Provide a place in your home where your child can write comfortably.

2. Be patient, and allow your child sufficient time to think and to write.
3. Respond regularly to your child's writing, either in conversation or in writing.
4. Be positive in discussing your child's writing. Praise what is clear and give suggestions for clarifying vague parts of the writing.

5. Allow your child to feel ownership of his or her work; to feel that the changes came primarily from him or her.

6. Be a model for your child by writing messages, letters, and directions. Be willing to change your own work when someone says that part of it is not clear.

Your role in advancing the writing skills of your children may be viewed as that of an adult companion. You encourage your child to express his feelings and thoughts, and you respond as a friend or companion would. Talk about what you like and what you find clear. And then ask your child to explain or to provide more specific examples for those statements you do not understand. In that way, you can give your child direction without making a lot of negative comments.

Activities for Fun and Learning

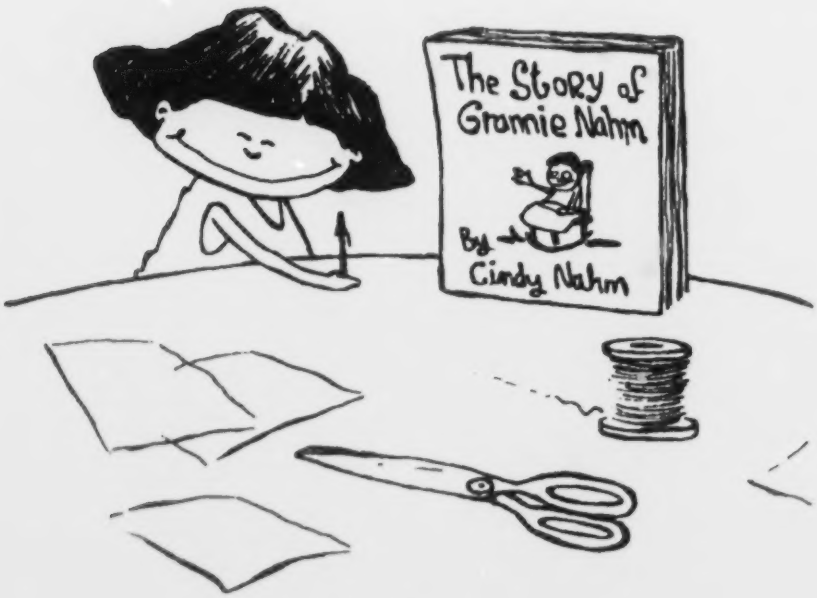
If kids experience writing as a meaningful activity, they may have a more positive attitude about it in school. Select one of the following activities to do with your child.

Written Talk

- Pretend you and your child are allowed to communicate only by writing letters or notes to each other—no talking is allowed. Leave notes for your child to describe activities for the day and be sure to include some questions, so she can respond back to you by sending a note.

Make Books

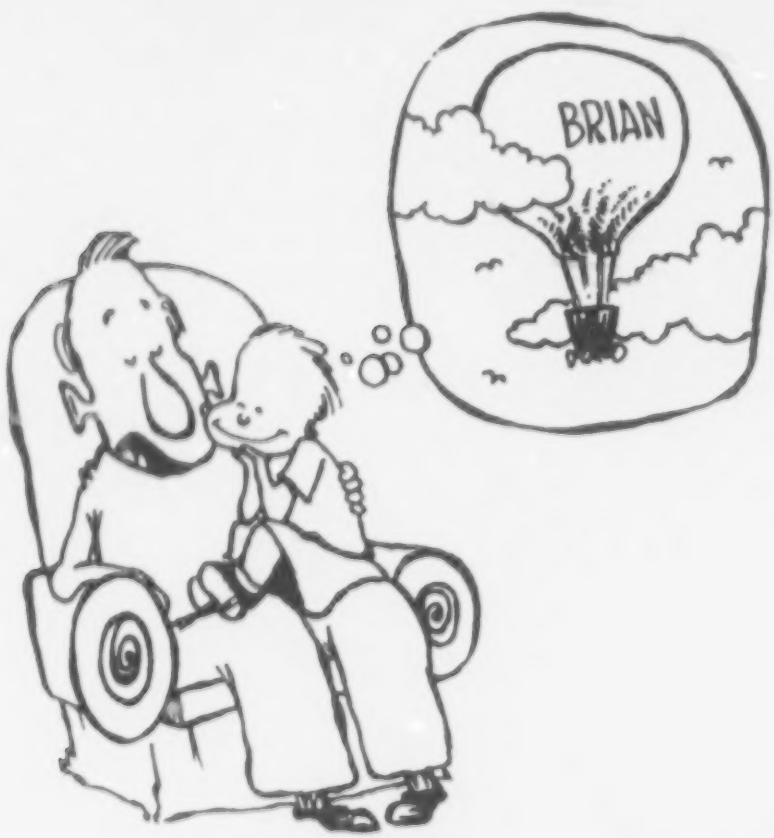
- If there is a workshop at your school or in your community on how to make books, be sure to sign up and attend; if not, then get a book from the library that has instructions for making books. Have your child draw pictures for his story first and then write the text under each picture. After the story is complete, compile it into book form and have your child design the cover. Finally, be sure to have him autograph the title page.



C8

Guided Fantasy

- This activity helps children to use their creative minds to make up an imaginary story. First, have your child close her eyes and then describe an imaginary journey in a calm voice. After you have completed the trip, have your child describe what she saw and how the trip ended. Then, if your child wishes, she could write down the story or create an imaginary journey for you to listen to and complete. The following are examples of a fantasy experience you might use:



✶ **Sensory-Awareness Statement**

Close your eyes and relax in your chair...Now listen to the noises in the room...Can you hear them? Feel the temperature of the room...Is it hot or cold?

✶ **Setting Statement**

Now turn the sounds of this room into the sounds of the meadow...Listen to the sounds of the meadow...What kind of day is it?... Sunny?... Cloudy?...Hot?...Cold?...Imagine that you are walking on a narrow pathway toward a mountain.

✱ Calming Statement

A calm breeze is blowing gently on you as you walk down...down...down a pathway. With each step, the mountain comes closer...and closer...and closer.

✱ Action Statement and Calming Statement

As you reach the mountain, you begin to climb up...up...up and around and around the side of the mountain...Through the clouds...you climb up...up...up.

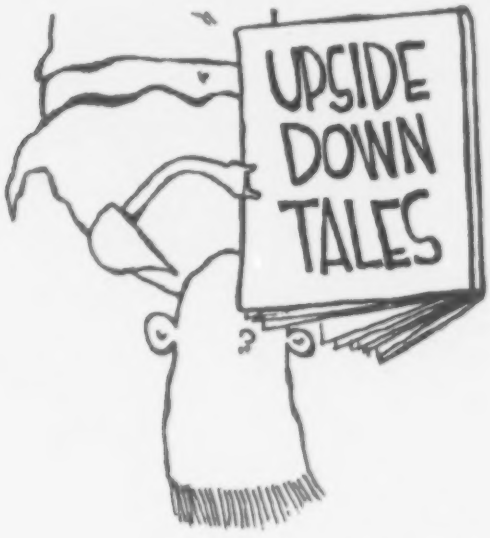
This activity was taken from Dorothy J. Watson's *Ideas and Insights: Language Arts in the Elementary School.*

Author Signing

- Visit a library or bookstore when an author of children's books will be signing copies of her books. Talk to your child about the author before going and have your child think of a question that he might like to ask the author. This activity allows your child to meet a "real" writer to become more enthusiastic about improving his own writing skills.

Another Viewpoint

❖ *Upside Down Tales* (Birch Lane Press) is a series that presents a traditional tale and then the same story from another character's point of view. Look for one of the following titles:



Little Red Riding Hood: The Wolf's Tale, by Della Rowland

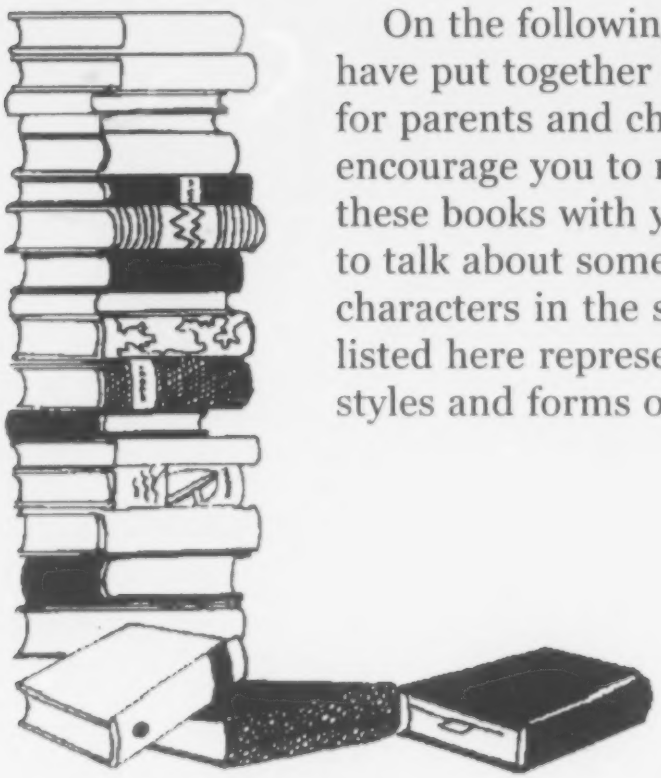
Hansel and Gretel: The Witch's Story, by Sheila Black

Jack and the Beanstalk: The Beanstalk Incident by Tim Paulson

Cinderella: Cinderella: The Untold Story by Russel Shorto

Then read one of the books and rewrite the story from another character's perspective to give your opinion about what really happened in the story.

Books for Parents and Children



On the following pages we have put together lists of books for parents and children. We encourage you to read a few of these books with your child and to talk about some of the characters in the stories. Books listed here represent various styles and forms of writing.

Books for Parents

You Can Help Your Child with Writing by Marcia Baghban. Suggests methods parents can use to help develop their children's writing at home. Offers writing and reading activities.

Beginning Literacy and Your Child by Steven B. and Linda R. Silvern. Recommends ways parents can participate in the development of their children's literacy. Provides activities for talking, reading, writing, and listening.

Creating Readers and Writers by Nancy L. Roser. Provides suggestions to help parents encourage their children to read. Offers several practical activities for parents.

101 Ideas to Help Your Child Learn to Read and Write by Mary and Richard Behm. Offers 101 practical suggestions for parents to help their children develop reading and writing skills in the home environment. Ideas include bedtime activities, using television, travel, games, and many other ways to incorporate literacy into the home.

Books for Parents and Children to Share

We divide our book selections into three age categories (4-6, 6-8, 8-10). Some children will be able to read several of the books by themselves, but other books might be too difficult. With your children, look through the books at a library, school, or bookstore, and decide which ones they can read. The books that are too difficult remain possible choices since you can read them aloud to your children.

Ages 4-6

More First Words: On My Street by Margaret Miller. Bold print words and photographs present several everyday objects a boy sees in his neighborhood. Helps a child associate a word or words with a specific object.

Bunny's Birthday by Michelle Cartlidge. Brief text and charming illustrations describe bunny's birthday party. Small board pages make it easy for little hands to handle.

When You Were a Baby by Ann Jonas. Shows, through large print and pictures, things a child can do now that she was not able to do when she was a baby. Helps a child see their own growth and development.

A Family for Jamie: An Adoption Story by Suzanne Bloom. Follows a young couple through the adoption process, from their expectations and planning to Jamie's arrival in their home. A warm, thoughtful story that expresses a family's love for their adopted baby.

Bigmama's by Donald Crews. The author shares his childhood memories of summer trips to his Bigmama's house. He reminisces about visiting with family members, adventures he had, and activities on the farm.

The Way I Feel Sometimes by Beatrice Schenk de Regniers. A wonderful collection of children's poems that convey their thoughts and emotions about their world. Lively watercolor pictures accompany the text.

Ages 6-8

Once in a Blue Moon by Nicola Morgan. Meet Aunt Floydie and her hilarious friends and help them celebrate her birthday. Characters use idioms to express themselves, and the text is illustrated accordingly.

The Star Maiden by Barbara Juster Esbensen; *Quillworker: A Cheyenne Legend* by Terri Cohlene. Both books represent written forms of oral tales which were told to explain occurrences in nature. Gives children examples of expressing spoken stories in written form.

Tonight is Carnaval by Arthuir Dorros. Illustrated with photographs of *arpilleras* (folk-art wall hangings). A Peruvian child explains how he and his family and friend prepare for and go to Carnaval. As he tells about life in the Andes Mountains, he gives readers a glimpse of his family's culture.

Geranium Morning by E. Sandy Powell (Carolrhoda). Tells the story of Timothy, whose

father is killed in an accident, and his friend, Frannie, whose mother dies after suffering from an incurable disease. Reveals some of the ways they both grieve and how they support each other through difficult times.

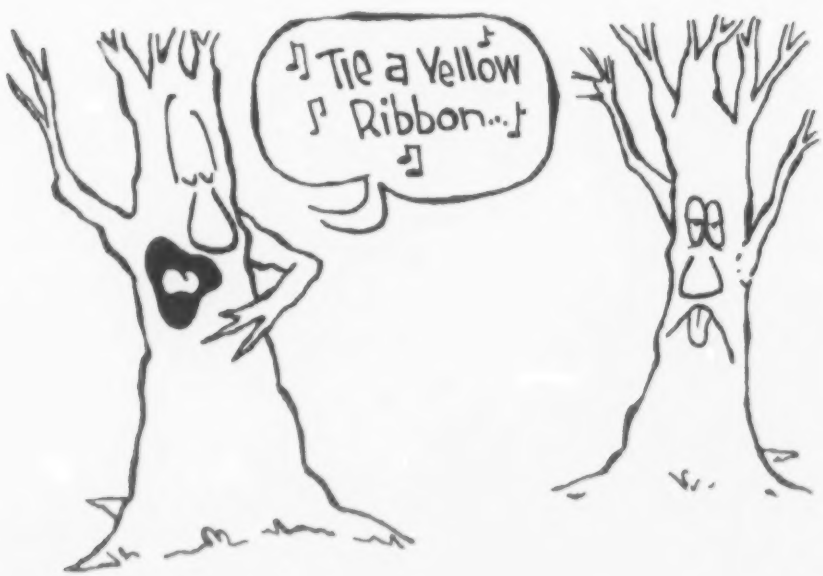
The Jolly Postman or Other People's Letters and *The Jolly Christmas Postman* by Janet and Allan Ahlberg. Both books present various ways people communicate through writing. These delightful and imaginative collections include greeting cards, personal and business letters, advertisements, invitations, storybooks, a guide, and a postcard. Goldilocks, B.B. Wolf, and Cinderella are just a few of the characters sending these messages.

Ages 8-10

Danger on the African Grassland by Mildred D. Taylor. The author has written this story about a mother rhinocerous and her offspring to communicate a message about saving endangered animals from human destruction.

All the Colors of the Race by Arnold Adoff. Poems expressing the thoughts of a person whose heritage is both black and white, and Protestant and Jewish. Provides a message of hope for the future.

Song of the Trees by Mildred D. Taylor. Based on a true story that occurred in rural Mississippi during the Depression. The author recounts her father's description of the huge trees on their homestead and his family's struggle to save them. A touching story depicting a love of nature and a fight for personal integrity.



Chingis Khan by Demi. Based on both history and legend, this tale portrays the life of a boy, Temujin, who later became the infamous Chingis Khan. Parents may point out to their children that people who wrote historical accounts have affected the way we perceive history now, because of the way they expressed themselves and their opinions in their writings.

My Life (and nobodyelse's) by Delia Ephron and Lorraine Bodger. Bold and flashy graphics illustrate this fill-in-the-blanks type of diary for recording thoughts, feelings, and facts about a child's life. Pages include space for writing about school, family, friends, emotions, music, problems, pets, dreams, and rules.

Kids Explore America's Hispanic Heritage by the Westridge Young Writers Workshop (John Muir Publications). Written for kids, by kids, to give readers a view of America's Hispanic culture. Covers history, food, festivals, art, stories, and language. This book was developed by students in the Westridge Young Writers Workshop, Jefferson County, Colorado. Provides an example of children writing for a purpose.

Magazines

Also ask your librarian for the following magazines:

The Acorn

Byline

Children's Digest

Creative with Words Publications

Cricket

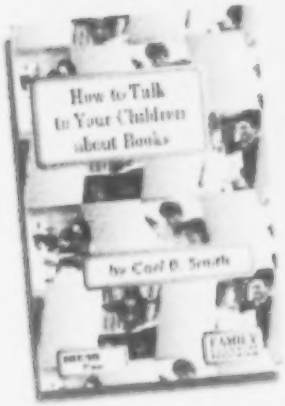
Highlights for Children

Merlyn's Pen: The Nationals Magazine of Student Writing, Grades 6 - 9

Seedling Series: Short Story International

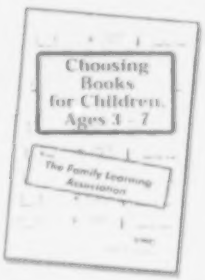
Stone Soup: The Magazine by Children

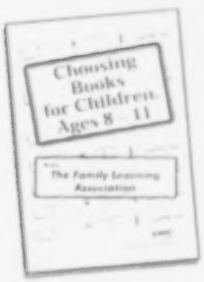
If you found this book useful, please try these other helpful books !



How to Talk to Your Children about Books *by Carl B. Smith*
Start a conversation that will last a lifetime. This book teaches you five easy techniques to prompt book discussions, guidelines for selecting books, how to make it a two-way exchange, plus motivation, values, and making it fun!

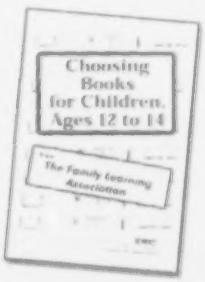
Choosing Books for Children, Ages 3 to 7
Use this resource to appeal to a variety of interests in your kindergarten to primary-age children. Filled with great tips for keeping book conversations going, this book pinpoints a vast array of age-appropriate reading materials.





Choosing Books for Children, Ages 8 to 11
Quick summaries of a huge collection of titles will make it easy to provide good reading for your pre-teens. Top-notch authors, relevant themes, and sensitive issues make this a good companion at the library or bookstore.

Choosing Books for Children, Ages 12 to 14
Let literature open up discussion about some of the difficult issues your teen is experiencing. Includes a special section on communicating about books through writing and journaling.



For information about these and other helpful books, contact:
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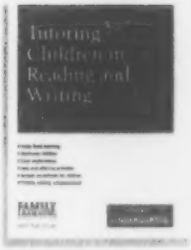
3925 Hagan Street, Suite 101, Bloomington, Indiana 47401
1.800.759.4723 www.kidscanlearn.com

Other Resources Available



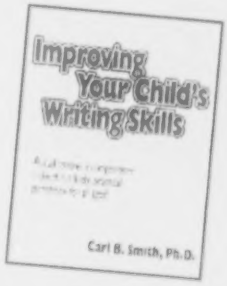
Tutoring Children in Reading and Writing

Book 1: Kindergarten
Book 2: Grades 1-2

These guidebooks use a hands-on approach to helping children improve essential skills. Using easy and effective activities, they focus on the building blocks of reading and writing with sample worksheets that focus on letter recognition, spelling, phonics, and comprehension.

Improving Your Child's Writing Skills

Using actual children's compositions, this fun guidebook takes kids through the entire process of writing, from pre-writing and drafting to revising and proofreading. The practical work sheets form a framework to hone the skills of any young writer.



Helping Children to Learn SERIES

Improving Reading and Learning

Phonics and Other Word Skills

Reading to Learn

Creating Life-Long Readers

The Self-Directed Learner

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Spelling for Writing, Books 1 – 5

This series of student workbooks provides all the direction needed to lead kids through the basic spelling patterns of English. By following the weekly lesson plans, you can improve spelling accuracy and the clarity of all written messages. Full of delightful line drawings that illustrate the words being learned, each book is crafted for the age-appropriate level.

Phonics Plus, Books A, B, and C

developed by The Family Learning Association

These three books help children learn to discriminate sound-symbol correspondences by listening, saying, seeing, and writing letters of the alphabet with illustrated writing and fill in the blank activities. Book A is appropriate for kindergartners and first-graders. Book B is for 1st–2nd grade, and Book C is for 2nd–3rd grade.

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Side A: Virginia Berry, Brian Sturm, Le Anne Millholland, and Andy Cambridge
Side B: Instructions by Joy Kahn

"The Houses on Harmony Lane"

Narrator/Miss Owl:	Virginia Berry
Mr. Moose/Mr. Fox:	Brian Sturm
Miss Possum:	LeAnne Millholland
Mr. Squirrel:	Andy Cambridge
Mrs. Raccoon/Mrs. Squirrel:	Joy Kahn

"Sara's Discovery"

Narrator:	Virginia Berry
Sara:	LeAnne Millholland
Grandpa John:	Brian Sturm

"Diamonds in the Rough"

Narrator:	Virginia Berry
Toby:	Andy Cambridge
Kani:	LeAnne Millholland
Red-faced Man:	Brian Sturm
Patrolman McDaniels:	Brian Sturm
Mom:	Joy Kahn
Mr. Yancy:	Brian Sturm

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